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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to gather data that would provide a descriptive profile of educational, employment, and experiential backgrounds of full-time and part-time adult home economics teachers in Florida, with the intent of using the findings to design inservice activities to promote professional teacher development and more relevant programs for the adults being served. The study was conducted in two parts: first, a survey to provide a descriptive profile of home economics teachers of adults; and second, the use of the Delphi technique to identify and set priorities of specific needs of adults to be met through home economics programs, as perceived by the teachers. The 339 full- and part-time home economics teachers of adults in the six most densely populated counties in Florida were the population for the first part of the survey, while the sample for the Delphi component consisted of 70 selected home economics teachers of adults. The data revealed that the average home economics teacher of adults in Florida is a white, married female, 46 years of age or older, and born in the United States. She has three children between the ages of 18 and 24, has a bachelor's degree, and is vocationally certified. She is a full-time teacher who has worked with adults for 10 years or less and has had employment other than as a teacher, and has minimal professional organization affiliation. The teachers identified a number of topics they would be willing to teach with additional inservice preparation. Using the Delphi technique, the selected teachers identified 10 perceived needs of adults. It was recommended that the findings of the study be used in designing teacher inservice education. (KC)

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF ADULT FULL AND PART-TIME HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS IN FLORIDA WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

Prepared to Accompany

Presentation at

The National Adult Education Conference
Anaheim, California

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Need and Purpose:

Assessments of the effectiveness of staff development and inservice education programs for teachers usually vary greatly. Rubin (1) states that teachers' professional growth through inservice teacher education has not been taken seriously and that we have failed to develop an appropriate scheme or methodology, for monitoring inservice education.

Furthermore, decisions concerning content, form, and arrangements for inservice education have typically been handled at the administrative level with little input from teaching faculty. As Rubin indicates, teachers recognize that they are not involved in contributing to decisions that impact upon their professional development and to further support this point, Brimm and Tollett (2) provided evidence to show that teacher attitudes reflect a general feeling that most inservice training is not responsive to their own needs.

Ingersoll (3) indicates that to fail to include the teacher in the decision-making process lacks sense for a variety of reasons: (a) when teachers are involved at the choice point, they are more likely to carry their interest into actual training; (b) it fails to make financial sense to offer something that has little relevance to teachers' needs; (c) to make all the decisions at an administrative level is little more than patronizing.

In a number of States, legislation is encouraging innovative and extensive inservice education for teachers. It is receiving increased attention from school districts, colleges of education and professional education associations.

Some promising strategies for inservice education are emerging. Davies and Aguina (4) identify one of these promising strategies as "collaboration". The interested parties of such a collaboration may be two or more of the following groups: (a) school districts; (b) teachers (or their professional organizations); (c) schools, colleges, or departments of education; (d) State Departments of Education; (e) administrative school personnel; and (f) school boards.

The following components are an essential part of collaborative inservice education efforts: (a) needs assessment, (b) design, (c) implementation, and (d) evaluation.

A review of professional education literature reveals that there is a minimum of generalized material on the inservice professional development of instructors of Adult Education.

The study being presented today was designed in a collaborative mode with the intent that the strategies utilized will impact upon continued collaboration to affect the utilization of the findings and recommendations.

The study was stimulated by needs expressed by supervisors administrators and teachers of Home Economics programs for Adults in Florida.

This study attends to the expressed need for systematically collected hard data that would assist administrators, supervisors, and teachers in planning and implementing more effective inservice education programs.

Supervisors, administrators and teachers have identified certification needs, subject updating needs, need for a variety of competencies in working with diversified target populations and re-direction needs in content and conceptual focus.

The purpose of this study was to gather data that would provide a descriptive profile of educational, employment and experiential backgrounds of full-time and part-time adult home economics teachers in Florida.

The intent is to utilize this data to design inservice activities to promote professional development and ultimately more relevant programs for the adults in the communities being served.

Specific objectives of the study are:

(1.) To gather data that would provide a descriptive profile of educational, employment, experiential backgrounds and unmet staff development and inservice educational needs of adult home economics teachers throughout the State of Florida.

(2.) To identify areas of professional development concerns of teachers of adult home economics as they relate to the concerns and needs of the target populations they serve.

(3.) To determine gaps between the preparation and backgrounds of adult home economics teachers and their professional needs in providing relevant programs to the target populations they must serve.

(4.) To develop a matrix of potential preservice and inservice delivery designs to assist supervisors of adult home economics teachers, teacher educators and other providers in planning development programs.

Design of the Study:

This study has two major components: one, a survey to gather data to provide a descriptive profile of home economics teachers of adults; and two, the use of the Delphi technique to identify and prioritize specific needs of adult populations to be met through home economics programs, as perceived by home economics teachers of adults.

The population for the first component, the descriptive survey profile, was the 339 full and part time home economics teachers of adults in the six most densely populated counties in Florida. These counties were selected for the following reasons: (1) there is an identifiable home economics supervisor/coordinator for home economics programs for adults in that county; and (2) the number of home economics teachers of adults provides a viable pool from which to collect the data needed. The sample for the Delphi component consisted of seventy home economics teachers of adults selected by six county supervisor/coordinators of home economics programs for adults.

The home economics supervisor/coordinators of adult programs in the six counties served as an Advisory Committee for the study. After the data collection instrument was designed, they assisted in the validation of the instrument; in setting up procedures for data collection; and in the distribution and collection of the data collection instrument.

Findings:

One of the purposes of this study was to provide a descriptive profile of the home economics teachers of adults in the six largest counties in Florida. Of the 339 surveys distributed, 160 or 47.2% were returned. The data revealed

that the average home economics teacher of adults in Florida is a white, married female, 46 years of age or older, born in the United States. She has three children between the ages of 18 and 24. She has a Bachelor's degree and is vocationally certified. She is a full-time teacher who has worked with adults for 10 years or less and has had employment other than as a teacher. She is not bi-lingual, has little experience working with the handicapped but has worked with the Black population. She works primarily in vocational technical schools or adult community-school centers and has minimal professional organization affiliation.

The respondents indicated that the primary constituencies of their current home economics adult programs were adults, 25 to 59 years of age (21.4%), older adults, over 60 years of age (11.3%) and multiple age groups consisting of adults and older adults (63.5%). During the 1979-80 school year a total of 390 course offerings were provided. Of these, 41.5% were in clothing and textiles; 18.7% in foods and nutrition; 11.3% in child development and family relations; 9% in housing and home furnishings; and 8.2% in consumer education and management.

The respondents identified those aspects of home economics they would be willing to teach with additional inservice preparation. The range of "willingness to teach" responses in each of the areas of home economics was as follows:

Area of Home Economics	Number of Concepts	% of Willingness to Teach Responses
Management, Family Economics, & Consumer Education	11	18.9 - 37.5
Housing & Home Furnishings	11	19.0 - 40.9
Human, Child Development & Family Development	12	26.9 - 36.2
Food & Nutrition	9	35.0 - 47.5
Textiles & Clothing	14	44.4 - 68.8

In an open-ended question, the respondents identified specific topics for in-service activities for home economics teachers of adults.

The respondents preferred, as sources of inservice education, Community Colleges (45.2%), Business and Industry (44.2%), Universities (43.7%) Teacher Education Centers (39.1%), County Supervisors (29.9%), and Agencies (18.6%).

Fifty-one per cent of the respondents indicated that one or two day workshops were the preferred length of time for inservice activities with Friday (32.0%) and Saturday (34.0%) being the preferred days of the week. Forty-two per cent of the respondents selected the morning (9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon) as the preferred time of day for such activities.

Seventy home economics teachers of adults were identified by the six supervisor/coordinators of home economics programs for adults to participate in the Delphi portion of the study. In the first phase of the study, the teachers were asked to identify the perceived needs of adult constituencies in their communities that could be addressed through home economics programs for adults. Fifty-four of the teachers responded to phase one, identifying over 300 areas of need. The items identified were edited and refined to avoid duplication and repetition. In the second phase of the Delphi, the respondents were asked to indicate, using a 5 point scale, the importance of each of the finalized 162 items. Thirty-eight responded to this phase and in the final phase, where respondents were asked to reexamine their first ratings, 30 respondents returned the completed materials. The ten items, identified as perceived needs of adults, using the Delphi technique were:

		Mean
1.5	Basic nutrition information for good health	4.58
1.5	Nutrition for the elderly	4.58
3.0	Meal planning on a limited budget	4.32
5.0	Care of the elderly	4.26
5.0	Preparing economical dishes	4.26
5.0	Beginners clothing construction	4.26
7.5	Stretching the dollar to meet food, housing and medical costs	4.19
7.5	Managing dual role-parenting and working	4.19
9.5	Infant and child nutrition information for disadvantaged families	4.16
9.5	Constructing women's clothing	4.16

Conclusions:

(1) Programs being offered are somewhat broader than they were preconceived but do not reflect comprehensive coverage of all aspects of Consumer and Homemaking Education.

(2) Home economics teachers of adults perceive the needs of their constituencies as broader than the programs that are being offered.

(3) Home economics teachers of adults have identified areas of need in which they desire additional inservice training.

(4) Home economics teachers of adults are receptive to a variety of modes of inservice education delivery systems.

Implications:

(1) Staff development activities need to be provided to narrow the gap between teachers' perceived needs of adult target populations and their abilities to provide programs to meet these needs.

(2) The expressed willingness of teachers to broaden the scope of their instruction through inservice education indicates the importance of staff development in catalyzing program change.

(3) Involvement of home economics adult education leadership personnel in advisory capacity in the initiation of studies having impact on their operations assures reality based facilitation of data collection and application of findings.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the findings of this study be utilized in the following ways:

(1) Do long range collaborative planning with interested agencies for the implementation and funding of inservice education.

(2) Utilize teachers' descriptive profile data as a basis for counseling teachers in relation to inservice education needs.

(3) Encourage teachers to use the Delphi Technique with their constituencies to validate teacher perceptions of constituency needs.

(4) Use survey data indicating priority needs of teachers as they relate to broadering offerings relevant to target populations as a basis for inservice education being planned.

(5) Provide an exemplary program of inservice education for supervisors and administrators to encourage them to provide effective inservice education at the local level.

(6) Involve teachers in the on-going decision-making related to the planning, initiation, implementation and assessment of inservice education programs.

(7) Encourage and prepare teachers who have had inservice education in specific content and process areas to take leadership in providing inservice development for other teachers.

(8) Utilize advisory committees of teachers at the local and state levels to assist in designing modes of delivery of inservice education.

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